HOME

A Story of Today and of All Days

By
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CHAPTER I

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Red Hill was hemmed in by the breathing silences of scattered woods, open fields and the far reaches of misty space, as though it were in hiding from the railroads, mills and highways of an age of hurry. Upon its long, level crest it bore but three centers of life and a symbol—Maple house, the Firs and Elm house, half hidden from the road by their distinctive trees but as alive as the warm eyes of a veiled woman; and the church.

The church was but a symbol—a mere shell. Within, it presented the appearance of a lumber room in disuse, a playground for rats and a haven for dust. But without all was as it had ever been, for the old church was still beloved. Its fresh, white walls and green shutters and the aspiring steeple, towering into the blue, denied neglect and robbed abandonment of its sting.

In the shadow of its walls lay an old graveyard whose overgrown soil had long been undisturbed. Along the single road which cut the crest of the hill from north to south were ruins of houses that once had sheltered the scattered congregation. But the ruins were hard to find, for they, too, were overgrown by juniper, clematis and a crowding thicket of mountain ash.

On these evidences of death and encroachment the old church seemed to turn its back as if by right of its fresh walls and unbroken steeple it were still linked to life. Through its small-paned windows it seemed to gaze contentedly across the road at three houses, widely separated, that half faced it in a diminishing perspective. The three houses looked toward the sunrise; the church toward its decline.

On a day in early spring Alan Wayne was summoned to Red Hill. Snow still hung in the crevices of East Mountain. On the hill the ashes, after the total eclipse of winter, were meekly donning pale green. The elms of Elm house, too, were but faintly outlined in verdure. Farther down the road the maples stretched out bare, black limbs. Only the firs, in a phalanx, scoffed at the general spring cleaning and looked old and sullen in consequence.

The colts, driven by Alan Wayne, flashed over the brim of Red Hill on to the level top. Coachman Joe's jaw was hanging in awe and so had hung since Mr. Alan had taken the reins. For the first time in their five years of equal life the colts had felt the cut of a whip, not in anger but as a reproof for breaking. Coachman Joe had braced himself for the bolt, his hands itching to snatch the reins. But there had been no bolting, only a sudden settling down to business.

For the first time in their lives the colts were being pushed, steadily, evenly, almost—but never quite—to the breaking point. Twice in the long drive Joe gathered up his jaw and turned his head, preparing spoken tribute to a master hand. But there was no speaking to Mr. Alan's face. At that moment Joe was a part of the seat to Mr. Alan, and, being a coachman of long standing in the family, he knew it.

"Couldn't of got here quicker if he'd let 'em bolt," said he, in subsequent description to the stable hand and the cook. He snatched up a pail of water and poured it steadily on the ground. "Jest like that. He knew what was in the colts the minute he laid hands on 'em, and when he pulls 'em up at the barn door there wasn't a drop left in their buckets, was there, Arthur?"

"Nary a drop," said Arthur, stable hand.

"And his face," continued the coachman. "Most times Mr. Alan has no eyes to speak of, but today and that time Miss Nance struck him with the hatpin—'member, cook?—his eyes spread like a fire and eat up his face. This is a black day for the Hill. Somethin's going to happen. You mark me."

In truth Mr. Alan Wayne had been summoned in no equivocal terms and, for all his haste, it was with nervous step he approached the house.

Maple house sheltered a mixed brood. J. Y. Wayne, seconded by Mrs. J. Y., was the head of the family. Their daughter, Nance Sterling, and her babies represented the direct line, but the orphans, Alan Wayne and Clematis McAlpin, were on an equal footing as children of the house. Alan was the only child of J. Y.'s dead brother. Clematis was also of Wayne blood, but so intricately removed that her exact relation to the rest of the tribe was never figured out twice to the same conclusion. Old Captain Wayne, retired from the regular army, was an uncle in a different degree to every generation of Wayne. He was the only man on Red Hill who dared call for a whisky and soda when he wanted it.

When Alan reached the house Mrs. J. Y. was in her garden across the road, surveying winter's ruin, and Nance with her children had borne the captain off to the farm to see that oft-repeated wonder and always welcome forerunner of plenty, the quite new calf.

Clematis McAlpin, shy and long limbed, just at the awkward age when woman misses being either boy or girl, had disappeared. Where, nobody knew. She might be bird's-nesting in the swamp or crying over the "Idylls of the King" in the barn loft. Certainly she was not in the house. J. Y. Wayne had seen to that. Stern and rugged of face, he sat in the library alone and waited for Alan. He heard a distant screen door open and slam. Steps echoed through the lonely house. Alan came and stood before him.

Alan was a man. Without being tall he looked tall. His shoulders were not broad till you noticed the slimness of his hips. His neck looked too thin till you saw the strong set of his small head. In a word; he had the perfect proportion that looks frail and is strong. As he stood before his uncle his eyes grew dull. They were slightly bloodshot in the corners and with their dullness the clear-cut lines of his face seemed to take on a perceptible blur.

J. Y. began to speak. He spoke for a long quarter of an hour and then summed up all he had said in a few words. "I've been no uncle to you, Alan; I've been a father. I've tried to win you, but you were not to be won. I've tried to hold you, but it

"I've Tried to Win You."

takes more than a Wayne to hold a Wayne. You have taken the bit with a vengeance. You have left such a wreckage behind you that we can trace your life back to the cradle by your failures, all the greater for your many successes. You're the first Wayne that ever missed his college degree. I never asked what they expelled you for, and I don't want to know. It must have been bad, bad, for the old school is lenient, and proud of men that stand as high as you stood in your classes and on the field. Money—I wont' talk of money, for you thought it was your own."

For the first time Alan spoke. "What do you mean, sir?" With the words his slight form straightened, his eyes blazed, there was a slight quivering of the thin nostrils and his features came out clear and strong.

J. Y. dropped his eyes. "I may have been wrong, Alan," he said slowly, "but I've been your banker without telling you. Your father didn't leave much. It saw you through junior year."

Alan placed his hands on the desk between them and leaned forward. "How much have I spent since then—in the last three years?"

J. Y. kept his eyes down. "You know, more or less, Alan. We won't talk about that. I was trying to hold you. But today I give it up. I've got one more thing to tell you, though, and there are mighty few people that know it. The Hill's battles have never entered the field of gossip. Seven years before you were born my father—your grandfather—turned me out. It was from this room. He said I had started the name of Wayne on the road to shame and that I could go with it. He gave me five hundred dollars. I took it and went. I sank low with the name, but in the end I brought it back, and today it stands high on both sides of the water. I'm not a happy man, as you know, for all that. You see, though I brought the name back in the end, I never saw your grandfather again and he never knew.

"Here are five hundred dollars. It's the last money you'll ever have from me, but whatever you do, whatever happens, remember this: Red Hill does not belong to a Lansing nor to a Wayne nor to an Elton. It is the eternal mother of us all. Broken or mended, Lansings and Waynes have come back to the Hill through generations. City of refuge or harbor of peace, it's all one to the Hill. Remember that."

He laid the crisp notes on the desk. Alan half turned toward the door but stepped back again. His eyes and face were dull once more. He picked up the bills and slowly counted them. "I shall return the money, sir," he said and walked out.

He went to the stables and ordered the pony and cart for the afternoon train. As he came out he saw Nance, the children and the captain coming slowly up Long lane from the farm. He dodged back into the barn through the orchard and across the lawn. Mrs. J. Y. stood in the garden directing the relaying of flower beds. Alan made a circuit. As he stepped into the road swift steps came toward him. He wheeled and faced Clem coming at full run. He turned his back on her and started away. The swift steps stopped so suddenly that he looked around. Clem was standing stock still, one awkward, lanky leg half crooked as though it were still running. Her skirts were absurdly short. Her little fists, brown and scratched, pressed her sides. Her dark hair hung in a tangled mat over a thin, pointed face. Her eyes were large and shadowy. Two tears had started from them and were crawling down soiled cheeks. She was quivering all over like a woman struck.

Alan swung around and strode up to her. He put one arm about her thin form and drew her to him. "Don't cry, Clem," he said, "don't cry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

For one moment she clung to him and buried her face against his coat. Then she looked up and smiled through wet eyes. "Alan, I'm so glad you've come!"

Alan caught her hand, and together they walked down the road to the old church. The great door was locked. Alan loosened the fastening of a shutter, sprang in through the window and drew Clem after him. They climbed to the belfry. From the belfry one saw the whole world with Red Hill as its center. Alan was disappointed. The hill was still half naked—almost bleak. Maple house and Elm house shone brazenly white through budding trees. They looked as if they had crawled closer to the road during the winter. The Firs, with its black border of last year's foliage, looked funereal. Alan turned from the scene, but Clem's little hand drew him back.

Clematis McAlpin had happened between generations. Alan, Nance, Gerry Lansing and their friends had been too old for her and Nance's children were too young. There were Elton children of about her age, but for years they had been abroad. Consequently Clem had grown to fifteen in a sort of loneliness not uncommon with single children who can just remember the good times the half-generation before them used to have by reason of their numbers. This loneliness had given her in certain ways a precocious development while it left her subdued and shy even when among her familiars. But she was shy without fear and her shyness itself had a flowerlike sweetness that made a bold appeal.

"Isn't it wonderful, Alan?" she said. "Yesterday it was cold and it rained and the Hill was black, black, like the Firs. Today all the trees are fuzzy with green and it's warm. Yesterday was so lonely and today you are here."

Alan looked down at the child with glowing eyes.

"And, do you know, this summer Gerry Lansing and Mrs. Gerry Lansing are coming. I've never seen her since that day they were married. Do you think it's all right for me to call her Mrs. Gerry like everybody does?"

Alan considered the point gravely. "Yes, I think that's the best thing you could call her."

"Perhaps when I'm really grown up I can call her Alix. I think Alix is such a pretty name, don't you?"

Clem flashed a look at Alan and he nodded; then, with an impulsive movement she drew close to him in the half-wheedling way of woman about to ask a favor. "Alan, they let me ride old Dubbs when he isn't plowing. The old donkey—she's so fat now she can hardly carry the babies. Some day when you're not in a great hurry will you let me ride with you?"

Alan turned away briskly and started down the ladder. "Some day, perhaps, Clem," he muttered. "Not this summer. Come on." When they had left the church he drew out his watch and started. "Run along and play, Clem." He left her and hurried to the barn.

Joe was waiting. "Have we time for the long road, Joe?" asked Alan, as he climbed into the cart.

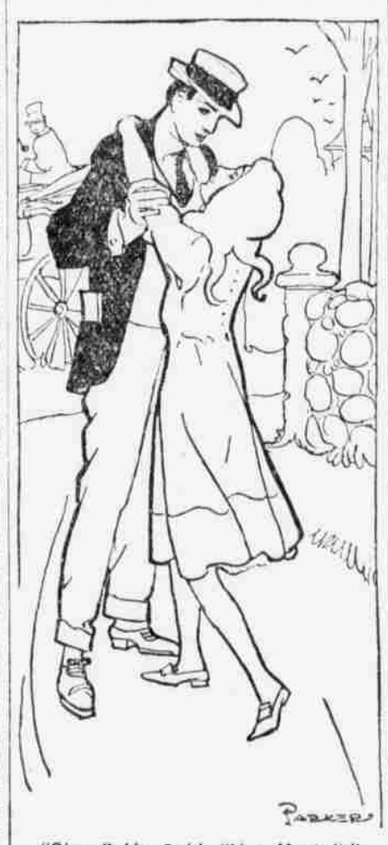
"Oh, yes, sir; especially if you drive, Mr. Alan."

"I don't want to drive. Let him go and jump in."

The coachman gave the pony his head, climbed in and took the reins. The cart swung out and down the lane.

"Alan! Alan!"

Alan recognized Clem's voice and turned. She was racing across a cor-



"Clem," He Said, "You Mustn't."

ner of the pasture. Her short skirts flounced madly above her ungainly legs. She tried to take the low stone wall in her stride. Her foot caught in a vine and she pitched headlong into the weeds and grass at the roadside.

Alan leaped from the cart and picked her up, quivering, sobbing and breathless. "Alan," she gasped, "you're not going away?"

Alan half shook her as he drew her thin body close to him. "Clem," he said, "you mustn't. Do you hear? You mustn't. Do you think I want to go away?"

Clem stifled her sobs and looked up at him with a sudden gravity in her elfish face. She threw her bare arms around his neck. "Good-by, Alan."

He stooped and kissed her.

CHAPTER II

To the surprise of his friends Alan Wayne gave up debauch and found himself employment by the time the spring that saw his dismissal from Maple house had ripened into summer. He was full of preparation for his departure for Africa when a summons from old Captain Wayne reached him.

With equal horror of putting up at hotels or relatives' houses, the captain upon his arrival in town had gone straight to his club and forthwith become the sensation of the club's windows. Old members felt young when they caught sight of him, as though they had come suddenly on a vanished landmark restored. Passing gamins gazed on his short-cropped hair, staring eyes, flaring collar, black string tie and flowing broadcloth and remarked, "Gee, look at de old spoit in de winder!"

Alan heard the remark as he entered the club and smiled.

"How do you do, sir?"

"Huh!" grunted the captain. "Sit down." He ordered a drink for his guest and another for himself. He glared at the waiter. He glared at a callow youth who had come up and was looking with speculative eye at a neighboring chair. The waiter retired almost precipitously. The youth followed.

"In my time," remarked the captain, "a club was for privacy. Now it's a haven for bellboys and a playground for whippersnappers."

"They've made me a member, sir."

"Have, eh!" growled the captain, and glared at his nephew. Alan took inspection coolly, a faint smile on his thin face. The captain turned away his bulging eyes, crossed and uncrossed his legs, and finally spoke. "I was just going to say when you interrupted," he began, "that engineering is a dirty job. Not, however," he continued, after a pause, "dirtier than most. It's a profession but not a career."

"Oh, I don't know," said Alan. "They've got a few in the army, and they seem to be doing pretty well."

"Huh, the army!" said the captain. He subsided, and made a new start. "What's your appointment?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

GET NEWS BY TELEPHONE

In Stockholm All the Latest Information Can Be Had by Calling Up "Central."

A "telephone newspaper" is now in active operation here, according to a Stockholm correspondent of the Brooklyn Eagle. It "comes out" at nine o'clock in the evening; that is to say, that at that hour or later anybody who will spend ten "oere," or less than three cents, can get the latest war news, etc., by calling up central. Instead of asking for another exchange and a number, one asks for "telephone news," whereupon the operator connects one with a phonograph that gives in a summary all the latest news that is not carried in the evening newspapers. If you are a regular subscriber your bill is charged with the extra amount, and if you call from a pay station you drop the little coin in a slot. The telephone that gives the news has a reenforced current so that one is sure to hear very plainly.

Devices of a similar sort have been used for some time in giving Sunday afternoon concerts. They are very popular on stormy days, when no one can go out, and one can sit at home in an easy chair and hear the best singers and reciters in the city. It is not "canned music" that is served, but the living voice that comes over the wire. The re-enforced current telephones are so perfected that one can hear concerts over the long-distance telephone. There have been cases where subscribers in Stockholm have heard concerts in Copenhagen and vice versa.

Hollow Bricks Popular.

During the past few years the use of hollow blocks and hollow bricks has extended rapidly. These are much lighter than solid bricks and effect an important saving in railway carriage but they must be distinguished from porous bricks. The weight alone is not a sufficient guide, as hollow bricks are now made which are indistinguishable in appearance from solid bricks. When cut or broken their hollowness is easily seen. On the continent porous bricks are defined as having a weight which is notably less than common bricks, but this definition will have to be abandoned now that hollow bricks are made in large numbers.

Curtain.

Once a poor actor was praying for bread. He was dying of hunger, and this fact contributed in making his speech and gestures eloquent. But his argument seemed to be of no avail. At last he neared the end of his endurance, but he redoubled his efforts. "O Lord," he said, "I pray you by all the powers that be to give me bread," and just then the curtain let down a roll.—Cornell Widow.

New Don't.

One absolutely guaranteed foolproof, safety-first "don't" for hunters: Don't go hunting.

Cause and Supply.

"What a fire-eater Jiggins is!"

"Yes; accounts for his constant supply of hot air."

Policewomen Prove Practical.

London policewomen have justified their "unfeminine" undertaking by the convincing means of real service. According to a London dispatch, England, after a six months' trial, is really beginning to like them, though at first there was violent opposition to the enterprise. Incidentally, these new public servants are winning favor, not so much by force as by tact and persuasive powers. They have been especially successful in quieting panic-stricken crowds during Zeppelin raids, in dealing with drunken and fighting soldiers, and in calming excited women and children in the streets.

Col. Churchill and His Father.

Winston Churchill is bound to remind those old enough to remember of his father, Lord Randolph, a man who made everybody sit up in joy or wrath, but who never achieved much of anything except mischief, brilliant and interesting but erratic and unconvincing.—Hartford Times.

Common Sense.

"Darling, fly with me."

"Stay down on earth, Freddie, and I'll consider your proposal."

French soldiers at the front are allowed one pint of wine a day.

A curio is any old thing that costs about ten times what it is worth.

Have you ever built bridges in South Africa and dreamed of—Home? Have you ever dug ditches in South America and had your little world turned upside down by the sight of a face from—Home? Have you ever been in exile and known that the Blue Peter would never fly for you—that the deep-throated siren of the homeward sailing steamer was only mocking the longing in your soul for—Home?